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The American RECORD GUIDE




MAY, 1949 VOL. 71, NO. 5

edited by PETER HUGH NEED

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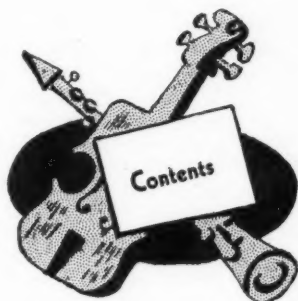
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May, 1949

Honoring Beecham's Birthday

Editorial Notes

ON APRIL 29, Sir Thomas Beecham celebrated his seventieth birthday. It is an occasion which prompts us to extend a full-some greeting. Having seen Sir Thomas only last year and finding his vivacity and wit belying his span of life, it does not seem quite possible that time for him has reached the three score years and ten. With characteristic whimsicality, he dispersed the years in a recent public interview. Asked how it felt to be seventy, he replied: "I have never felt seventy, and never intend to." Our silent applause is not prompted by his banter, nor by the fact that we at two score and ten find his remark sustaining manna to our ego, but rather to the wisdom in his utterance, for does it not imply a faith in living? It recalls Julian Huxley's affirmation, voiced in his credo, *I Believe*: "The only faith that is both concrete and comprehensive is in life, its abundance and its progress."

Had Sir Thomas wished to quote a famous man he might have drawn from the Roman senator, Cicero, and said: "For as I like a young man, in whom there is something of the old, so I like the old man in whom there is something of the young; and he who follows this maxim, in body will possibly be an old man, but he will never be an old man in mind." But Sir Thomas quotes no one but himself; his ready wit attests his youthfulness of mind and spirit. He has always been a genial companion to old and young alike, and we have heard him discuss music and art with the very young and never found him patronizing.

It is both an appropriate gesture and a matter of commonsense business procedure that RCA Victor this month celebrates Sir Thomas's seventieth birthday by a special

release of recordings made in the past two years under the most ideal circumstances. Headed by his performance of Gounod's *Faust*, which from the standpoint of orchestral direction may well make record history the list also contains his renditions of Dvorak's symphonic poem — *The Golden Spinning Wheel*, Mozart's *Concerto for Flute and Harp*, Debussy's symphonic suite — *Printemps*, the *Overture*, *Polka* and *Dance of the Comedians* from Smetana's opera — *The Bartered Bride*, Liszt's symphonic poem — *Orpheus* and Chabrier's inimitable *Marche Joyeuse*. It is a goodly list — a more imposing one than the English made for the occasion. Yet, the value of H.M.V.'s two offerings makes us wish they too had been included: an album of 18th-century Music, containing Mozart's *Divertimento in D major, K. 131* and the *Menuet and Trio* from the *Divertimento in B flat, K. 287*, the Haydn *Symphony No. 40 in F major*, and the *Overture and Pastoral Symphony* from Handel's *The Messiah* (the latter we, of course, possess), and Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote*. When music-making materializes, like that exploited in these recordings, we find ourselves "hog hungry", as our Southern friends would say, and reluctant to allow others to consume what is momentarily denied to us. Surely, for such a gala occasion as Beecham's seventieth birthday, Victor and H.M.V. should have united in a joint list, a sumptuous repast for his many admirers on both sides of the Atlantic. If ours is a gluttonous appetite, as yet unsated, we, in America, who have acquired the larger share can sympathize with those in England who acquired so much less.

An English Tribute

One is reminded of W. S. Meadmore's article on Beecham in the April issue of *The Gramophone*, which we hope all of the conductor's friends and admirers will read. Meadmore began by saying of Sir Thomas' birthday: "It should be a national occasion. In France it would be. There they know how to make a gesture to a great artist. Here we hardly realize a prophet is amongst us until he is dead." His further remark, that "it is gratifying that the Gramophone Company will celebrate the occasion with a special issue of records", is assuredly a statement of tact, and in view of Victor's

magnanimous offering it leaves England rather neglecting its prophet.

To digress for a moment from our subject, it might be observed that Victor seems fit to offer the Beecham recordings only on 78 discs. The fabulous and much-tooted 45 has been neglected. One is tempted to say — what gives?

Behind the music-making of Sir Thomas lies a lifetime concentrated to the study and promulgation of great music. There was a time when a certain willful capriciousness manifested itself in his performances. Meadmore says that "his early recording days coincided with a period when his brilliancy was such that many were bewildered and unable to decide whether he was a heaven-sent genius or a flashy charlatan". The author cites instances of radical quickening of pace in operatic performances on occasion. But, "That belongs to the past", and Sir Thomas "has certainly made musical history and some of his performances will be talked of as long as music lovers of this generation are living and the records of his conducting survive."

A Knowledge of Recording

Sir Thomas is one of a small group of musicians who understand and appreciate the problems of music in reproduction. From childhood he has known the best in live and reproduced music, and his interest in the latter is proved not only by a self-critical attitude toward his own recordings but by his interest in an extraordinary instrument which his father had in his music room, the orchestrion. Sir Thomas tells about it in his delightful autobiography, *A Mingled Chime*. He says its advent in the home was "the event that threw all the previous excitements of my life well into the shade." It arrived in his "later childhood" (the year is not given) following a period in which a most gifted and musical child had been spending much time at the piano and the organ "hammering out all the operas I could read." The orchestrion, Sir Thomas describes as "a gigantic object, as big as the side of a cottage, which reproduced not too inaccurately the sound and effect of an orchestra of 40 or 45 players". It played Mozart and Beethoven symphonies, overtures and selections from the operas of

(Continued on page 262)



SOME AMERICAN INDIAN MUSIC ON RECORDS

By Henry Shultz*

THE Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona are a profoundly artistic people. This fact cannot escape anyone who (as the present writer) lives among them. Their art is highly formalized like so much "primitive" art. It serves more deeply than any other item of their culture, to reveal their extraordinary feeling for the continuity and oneness of life as well as the unusually persistent vitality of their culture, which has withstood 400 years of continuous onslaught from every side by the materialistic civilization of the dominant whites who surround them.

One hesitates, indeed, to speak of this art in any such terms as "primitive," just as one hesitates to damn it slightly as "highly formalized" — for what art is not highly formalized? What is art at all, for that matter, if it is not a formalization, in one degree or another, of human experience? It would be a bold critic, in my view, who would distribute degrees of value among the arts of human cultures on the basis of their being more or less "primitive." Who is to be the judge of

primitiveness? Indians have an embarrassing habit of looking down on the average White man as somewhat of a fool and a good deal more of a knave, and there are Indian cultures in the United States in which one aspect of the education of the children by their elders comprises such a vigorous and consistent disparagement of our materialistic American culture that it can in no sense be dismissed as merely the sour grapes of the loser.

Art, for the Indian, is in the deepest sense social. There are no ivory towers in a pueblo, and no single activity of man is ever practiced there by an Indian for its own sake alone. A Pueblo Indian's life, if it has not been corrupted or bankrupted by the more destructive kind of contact with White culture to which some of the pueblos have been subjected, is a striving for completeness and wholeness in every sphere of activity open to him — economic, political, aesthetic, or religious.

The Ideal Pueblo Man is not the Businessman, nor the Political Man, nor the Artist, nor the Priest, but the Whole Man. Among

*Mr. Shultz, who teaches at the Indian School Club, at Albuquerque, N.M., is exceptionally qualified both by experience and sympathy, to write on his subject.

real Pueblo Indians, therefore, economic well-being and political authority are to be thought of not in terms of individual achievement acquired at the expense of one's neighbor, but only in terms of the group of which he is a member. A sense of beauty is not the prerogative of the "cultured" or the especially equipped, but is a part of the ordinary everyday feelings of every man, which he is perfectly conscious of sharing with all his relatives and neighbors. It may, of course, be recognized that now and then some men are, by one reason or another, more talented artists than others, or that some men are more deeply religious than others; but for an Indian publicly to proclaim (as do many Whites) the lack of an aesthetic sense, or to deny the religious sense, would be an unthinkable confession of his lack of humanity and manhood.

The Dance Ceremonies

Ideally, there is a profound interdependence in pueblo life of all the aspects of man's existence. It could be said, for example — almost as a generality — that every Indian ceremonial dance in the Southwest is a prayer for rain; but it would have to be noted what else such a ceremonial would be. A man dancing on such an occasion is participating in a religious ceremony not as a spectator, or even a supplicant in a church, but as a member of equal consequence in the community with any other, including the priest, and his part of the community arrangements with the gods is to be discharged equally with theirs. The religion, moreover in these little theocratic societies, is inextricably intertwined with the economy, so that our dancer is also helping, along with all his neighbors, to invoke economic sanction (by bringing rain) which are supernatural, to be sure, but which will redound, not to his personal benefit only, but to that of the whole pueblo. He is also satisfying his most urgent aesthetic drives, for Southwestern Indian ceremonial dances, ritualistic though they be, are, in their preponderance, consummate works of art. The Indian's aesthetic satisfaction may go even deeper: for, in addition to dancing himself, he may have "made" a new song, or may have helped, within certain well-defined ritualistic limits, to

design the masks and costumes.* Afterwards he may even paint a picture of the dance or dancers, if his particular pueblo permits the painting of sacred ceremonies. Each of these experiences is a positive aesthetic manifestation. And, finally, there is a very important consideration that the man is taking an expected part in the communal activity of a group without whose constant love and support he would feel himself as nothing.

Frustration Unknown

It will be seen, then, that the Indian ceremonial dance, interesting and beautiful as it may be to Whites by reason of its musical, spectacular, or plastic qualities, is never (by Indians), and should never be (by Whites), regarded *in vacuo*, since it involves so many other factors than merely aesthetic considerations. With all these avenues of fulfillment open to every man — I might even say imposed upon him, except that he does not feel it an imposition—there has been, ideally, in the past in pueblo society no frustrated man. But conditions since the war are no longer ideal.

Because then of this profound interdependence upon each other in nearly all aspects of pueblo life, the music of these Indians is, more often than not, functional: songs, i. e., are "composed" for a purpose, whether it be a strictly ritualistic purpose, as for a religious ceremony, or a more ordinary purpose of helping the time pass quickly while the corn is being ground. The great majority of the songs to be considered in this survey are designed to accompany dances which can be either ceremonialistic in intent or merely "pleasure" dances — although anyone who has lived with Indians is familiar with their readiness to sing on any other occasions.

I do not know of any Indian instrumental music — which is not to say that it does not exist. I mean merely that I have never run across any, nor seen any references to any in the literature on the subject. However, I am fully familiar only with the music of the Pueblos.

The music of the Southwestern Indians is vocal and homophonic. In general, but not invariably, it is pentatonic; but such a tag is not to be taken too strictly, nor should any other reduction of Indian music to our scales be taken too strictly, for intervallic relationships unknown to European musicology

* It is my considered opinion that nowhere else — even in Hollywood — are the Indians surpassed as costume designers

would soon appear by the hundreds to confute any categorist so rash. Its melodic patterns show enormous variety, while its rhythms reveal an astonishing suppleness, richness, and complexity to be found nowhere in "Western" music between plainchant and Stravinsky.

A Different Vocal Production

The methods and ideals of vocal tone production vary from tribe to tribe, but it would be safe to say that in no case are they the methods and ideals of White Americans or Europeans. The jaws are never opened very wide, and the tones are produced under considerable pressure. Occasionally, as in the Navajo *Yei-Be-Chai*, a remarkable falsetto is used. A certain sobriety of execution seems to be the ideal in most of the Rio Grande pueblos, with more exuberance noticeable in such pueblos as Zuni and Hopi. Many exceptions, however, could be found to such generalities; and Indians never seem to find it difficult to combine such disparate elements as sobriety and exuberance in any action of life.

Nothing is so hilariously funny to an Indian as a White coloratura soprano. The very quality of a soprano voice as we know it apparently amuses them, for their own women don't sing that way. A coloratura appears to be the very acme, the very symbol, of all that is foolish in the White Man's culture. In Zuni Pueblo, however, my records of Flamenco songs sung by La Nina de los Peines were very popular with my friends, who would pull them out and put them on the phonograph whenever they came to call.

In another of the New Mexico pueblos there is a woman who has had some formal training in singing — the White Man's way — and in addition to singing such things as *In the Land of the Sky Blue Water* and *By the Waters of the Minnetonka*, she also sings many of the songs of her own pueblo in the White Man's way. Her singing is well thought of by the Whites in that area, and she is always a big hit at her public performances; but the Indians think she is killingly funny, and the old men who are the *Koshare* of her pueblo often parody her appearance and what they imagine to be her style of singing, by clapping their hands under the false bosoms which they don for the occasion, screeching in high

"womanly" voices, and otherwise belittling her efforts.

The almost invariable accompaniment to Indian singing is (among the Southwestern tribes) the drum. The best ones used by the pueblos come from the Cochiti Pueblo, although the deep-throated Plains Indians drums are used in some pueblos for certain dances (mainly dances which have been borrowed from the Plains Indians). These drums also appear frequently in Zuni, and are preferred by the Apaches.

I well remember, however, a dance I witnessed while I was living in Zuni Pueblo, in which the singers (themselves also the dancers), singing from within the gorgeous masks which enclose the entire head at Zuni, producing the unique vocal timbre to be heard (by Whites) only there and at Hopi, were accompanied solely by the rhythmic jingling of hundreds of tiny silver bells fastened to their legs, and by the rattle of deertoets in turtles shells fastened behind the knee. It was the most ravishing sound I have ever heard.

There are other accompanying instruments. Most frequent are gourd rattles held in the hand and flourished or shaken rhythmically as exigency demands. Ratchets and other rhythmical instruments are also used, as are whistles, flutes, and other wind instruments.

The Wind Instruments

A word must be said here about some of these wind instruments. In Zuni and in a few of the other pueblos, as well as among some of the other Southwestern tribes, there are ancient flutes. These are variously "cross-flutes" or "end-flutes." Tourists are probably most familiar with their use from seeing (and hearing) them during the Shalako, the great winter solstice ceremony at Zuni, which has been called "the greatest of all the North American Indian ceremonials."

At this ceremony, the Shakalo, who might be identified as the messengers of the rain gods visit Zuni to see how everything is getting along. There are six of them, ten feet tall, with large snapping beaks, who run with little bird-like steps — a spectacular sight as they appear at sundown in the pueblo from their home in the mountains, each accompanied by his retinue of blanketed figures. Each goes to a house which has been especially prepared for him, and there dances

most of the night in dedication of this house, while various Zuni dancing fraternities spell him in the ceremonies. The next day, after everyone has tried to catch a little sleep in the middle of the morning, the Shalako gods hold intricate ceremonial races on the other side of the river, to fall during which means bad luck for the pueblo during the coming year. During these races, each group of Shalako-attendants sings its own songs, and it is at this time that the ancient Zuni flutes are played.

There are six Shalako figures, and consequently six groups of attendant singers, each with its own songs and accompanied by its own instruments, who perform simultaneously, producing a curious and exciting kind of primitive counterpoint. While listening, I have often wondered what sort of contrapuntal or harmonic art might eventually have been evolved from this, had not White culture intervened, forcing the Zunis to concentrate on maintaining pure what they already had and precluding further development, if development there was ever to be.

Another pueblo "wind instrument" deserves mention because it was responsible for one of my most delightful experiences at an Indian dance. It was at San Felipe Pueblo (along the Rio Grande, midway between Albuquerque and Santa Fé) on a Christmas Eve a few years ago. In many of the pueblos, dancing takes place in the old Spanish mission churches at this time, and on this occasion — a bright, clear, cold midnight — the drumming and singing could be heard as soon as one stepped from a car. I was at once taken in tow by some young Indians I know there, and escorted to the church. It was full of people — both tourists and Indians, and a large group of dancers, even more gorgeously costumed and painted than usual, was dancing in the nave of the church. The chorus of old men, with the drums, was up front by the chancel.

An Enchanting Din

This was all as it should have been (except possibly in the view of those unaccustomed to the idea of Indians dancing in a church). What was new to me, however, was an additional accompaniment. Up in the balcony of the church were fifty or sixty little boys, all puffing briskly on those small metal whistles, made in the shape of birds, which one finds at the ten-cent store, fills with

water, and blows to produce a sound somewhat approximating the warble of a particularly enthusiastic canary. This utter-enchanting din — so gay, so naive, and so perfectly in keeping, it seemed to me, with the Christmas spirit — filled the church, and supplied a delicately cacophonous *descant* to the brave and fervent *cantus firmus* of the men down below in the nave, with their own jangling leg-bells and pulsating drum. One received the feeling almost of a Giotto *Nativity* innocent, pure and ardent, but at the same time sophisticated and significant beyond appearances.

The question of the species of faith involved here does not trouble me — although I think it would have delighted Saint Francis, whose Order, late in the seventeenth century, built this San Felipe Church — except insofar as it reveals the Indians' faith in themselves and their power perpetually to renew their art at its ultimate human sources.

Other characteristics of Indian music — its rhythmic subtlety, its melodic line, etc. — will be remarked in connection with the discussion of the records which will follow.

(To be continued next month)

Editorial Notes

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Rossini, Verdi and Wagner, and "miscellaneous pieces of a dozen other composers great and small". From this super-duper instrument, as it might be described in the popular parlance of our day, Sir Thomas acquired a greater insight into the music reproduced and a deeper appreciation of the composers. Of the phonograph, many of my contemporaries as well as myself could similarly speak, though the emphasis in its case lay at first in vocal artistry, too often exploited in music of lesser worth.

Gaisberg in his book, *The Music Goes Round*, says of Sir Thomas' interest in reproduced music that he "has been in and out of the recording studios and has conducted and heard more records than any other conductor alive or dead." His recordings, continues Gaisberg, are "prepared with scrupulous care, and in vetting and re-vetting his own titles for issue he is extra vigilant." Gaisberg tells about his passing records of Wagner's *Faust Overture*, subse-

quently withdrawing them after hearing an interpretation by another conductor, then recording the "work all over again". As asserts Gaisberg, "and yet some people have the face to dub him an irresponsible dilettante". In summing up the author says: "To attain his musical ends this subtle and sensitive man will go the limit, defying all conventions to achieve his ideals".

The sensitivity of Beecham's music-making — in direct contradiction to his frequently barbed utterances, which though evidencing his courage to speak his mind, have not left some unscarred — is inseparable from his bringing-up. He is a patrician, whose cultural background cannot be refuted. Someone once said of him that he suggests a member of the House of Lords in the dignity of his carriage and mien. Yet, it goes much deeper than that. He has always appreciated the best in art and living. For the development of music culture, he has made great sacrifices and spent huge sums of money. There was a time when he was forced to struggle after he decided to adopt music as a career without his father's blessings. But soon his grandfather provided him with means to pursue his chosen career and eventually through the influence of friends he and his father were reconciled.

"Triumph of Culture"

Emerson's assertion that "the triumph of culture is to overpower nationality" has always seemed to me applicable to Beecham's case. His understanding and feeling for music of Germany, France, Italy, as well as his own country, is marked by an interpretative refinement and insight that belies his nationality. Critics have acclaimed his interpretations of Richard Strauss incomparable both in England and Germany, and his performances of Berlioz as fine as any sponsored by the French. His feeling for lyrical grace, poetic beauty, and tonal coloration, distinguish his Mozart performances. There is both "majesty and mystery" in them, as Virgil Thomson has said. The subtlety and sensitivity of such music-making owes its impetus and growth to a cultural background in which an appreciation for the best has strengthened artistic convictions and exacted from him the highest skill in executing them.

Beecham's merits as an orchestral con-

ductor in recent years have found critics and the public more unanimous in their praise than in former times. Today singers and orchestral players are loud in their approval of his cooperation and guiding spirit. It is this shining spirit that radiates a glow in his latest recording of *Faust*. At every turn of the page, his sound musical intelligence assists the singers immeasurably, sustaining one's interest even in their moments of less persuasive artistry. He is the true star of the occasion — a leader who inspires his chosen associates. To your editor, Sir Thomas said of the main participants of his *Faust* performance: "These fresh, young singers are the stars of tomorrow, which I illumine today."

To Sir Thomas on his seventieth birthday, your editor and his staff — and we feel certain a host of our readers sharing our admiration for him — extend heartiest congratulations and the best of wishes.



From Duet to Sextet

By Philip H. Delano

In our last installment of this series (August 1948) we mentioned the first record made by Alma Gluck and Paul Reimers late in 1914. Their voices blended exceptionally well and early in 1915 another of their duets was issued. It was followed by several more at intervals of a few months. Though all of German lieder, public interest seems to have been sufficient for a sizable list from the two artists. To summarize them briefly, the titles are as follows:

- Du, du liegst mir im Herzen* (Pax Berger) 87182, 87536, 3011 (late 1914)
- Der Jäger langdem Weiber ging* (Pax-Berger) 87184, (Jan. 1915)
- Drunten im Unterland* (Weigle)..... 87224, 87539, 3013 (Aug. 1915)
- Der Tannenbaum* (Volkslied)..... 87229, 87543, 3014 (Dec. 1915)
- Hans und Liesel* (Volkslied)..... 87183, 87537, 3012 (Feb. 1916)

Treue Liebe (Kuecken).....87226,
87540, 3011 (Mar. 1916)
Das Steierland (Seidel).....87227,
87541, 3013 (Apr. 1916)
Es steht ein' Lind' (arr. Berger).....87228,
87542, 3012 (Feb. 1917)
Au clair de la lune (Lully).....87185,
87538, G-7-34004, HMV, DA 301
Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht.....87284,
87544, 3014

Further of the Gluck-Homer duets were also issued through 1915-1917 and continued to sell like hot popcorn. The complete list was:

Whispering Hope (Hawthorne)87107, 87254
3000 (June 1912), Gr 8-4257, HMV DA 158
O That We Two Were Maying (Nevin) (first master) 87110, (Dec. 1912)
O That We Two Were Maying (second master) 87110, 87525, 3001 Gr-3-4064, HMV DA 158
I Waited for the Lord (Hymn of Praise) 88375, 89097
(July 1912), Gr 04243, HMV DB 478
Stabat Mater—Quis est homo (Rossini) 88380, 89098, (Aug. 1912), Cr 2-054103, HMV DB 575
Hansel und Gretel—Hexenritt, Knusperwalzer (Humperdinck)....87131, 87526, (Apr.—1913), Gr 7-44010
Hansel und Gretel—Suse, liebe Suse 87418, 89099, 8030 (Apr. 1913), Gr 2-044002 HMV DB 576
One Sweetly Solemn Thought (Ambrose)....88419, 89100, 8030 (Apr. 1913), Gr 2-044001, HMV DB 476
Abide with Me (Monk).....87132, 87527 3008 (May 1913), Gr 3-4063, HMV DA 451
Rock of Ages (Hastings).....87198, 87528 3009 (Aug. 1914), Gr 3-4066, HMV DA 452
Passage-Bird Farewell (Hildach) 87199, 87529 Gr 3-4063, HMV DA 518
Tales of Hoffman—Bacarolle (Offenbach) 87202, 87532, 3010 (Oct. 1914), Gr 7-34003, HMV DA 453
Life's Dream Is O'er (Asher)...87201, 87531 3010 (Jan. 1915), Gr 2-4247, HMV DA 453
Jesus, Lover of My Soul (Holbrook) 87200, 87530, 3009 (Feb. 1915), Gr 2-4266, HMV DA 452
One Sweetly Solemn Thought (Ambrose)....87212, 87534, 3000 (June 1915)

I Need Thee Every Hour (Lowry) 87203, 87533 3008 (Oct. 1915), Gr 2-4325, HMV DA 451
Long, Long Ago (Bayly).....87267, 87535 3001 (Jan. 1917), Gr 2-4103, HMV DA 518
Crucifix (Faure).....88577, 89102 8029 (Mar. 1917), Gr 2-031025, HMV DB 575
Norma — Mira O Norma (Bellini) 88576, 89101, (June 1917), Gr 2-054069, HMV DB 478

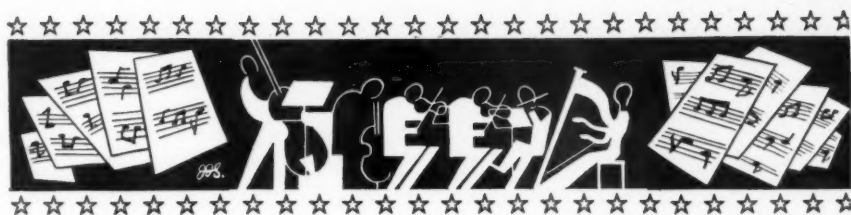
Some points in the Gluck-Homer listings above are worthy of noting here. In *O That We Two Were Maying*, we have a case of a second "take". The original issue appears only on a Patent label in which the singing ends on a long harmonized note. At a later date, probably 1913, the record was remade and ends on a short note. The second version appears on Patent label as well as later labels. It bears the numeral 3 at left of the label and a microscopic R at right. As this version of the song remained in the catalogue for many years and was later doubled it is the more common of the two. Another point of interest is that those records retained in the catalogue were renumbered about 1918. The 10" duets were transferred from the 87,000 series to the 87,500 list and various 88,000 numbered items were given 89,000 numbers. In most cases identical masters were used, hence the different numbers were the original performances. Of the titles listed, the duets from *Norma* and *Hansel and Gretel* possess more than average collector interest.

In February 1915, appeared the McCormack and Reinald Werenrath duet — *The Moon Has Raised her Lamp Above* from Benedict's opera *The Lilly of Killarney* (64440, 3024, Gr 2-4205, HMV DA 172). The title is interesting and the record is easily found, as is also Faure's *Crucifix* by the same pair which appeared in December 1917 (64712, 3024, Gr 3-4048, HMV DA 172).

A really choice tidbit appeared in April 1915, when Farrar and Homer blended voices in the Italian song *Alla Capanna Andiamo* by Campana (89072). Unfortunately, this disc is quite scarce. These were the years that Miss Farrar was enjoying her great success at the Metropolitan as Carmen, hence it was quite logical for Victor to commemorate her popularity in the role by issuing a series of excerpts. Although Caruso had been her original Don Jose, in the recordings Martinelli assumed this role. Her Escamillo was Amato. The concerted scenes from *Carmen*, issued October 1915, were as follows:

Farrar and Martinelli
Halte la! Qui va la (Act 2)....88536, 89112 8019, HMV DJ 108
Au quartier pour l'appel (Act 2)88532, IRCC 58

(Continued on page 286)



RECORD NOTES AND R E V I E W S



CHAUSSON: *Symphony in B flat major, Op. 20; Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra*, conducted by **Dimitri Mitropoulos**. Columbia set MM-825, four discs, price \$5.00.

CHAUSSON was among the most refined of French composers and the little he left us in the short span of his life commands respect. His chamber music is especially appealing with its warm lyricism and melodic beauty. His symphony, which I have long admired and value above that of his teacher Franck, has not met with the public approbation it deserves. Its eloquence and sensitivity does not preclude expressive vitality. Someone once said that Chausson had perhaps the most spontaneous gift of Franck's many pupils. To the listener who admires Franck, Chausson's brand of ecstasy seems perhaps tame in comparison, even his use of chromaticism — culled from his master — is less obvious. There are some who claim shortcomings in the workmanship, yet the famous Franck symphony is far from perfect in this respect. But this was a first symphony, one of true emotional spontaneity. Had the composer lived longer he might have bettered his craftsmanship but hardly the spontaneity.

In my review of Stock's performance (February 1944), I pointed out that Chausson's music has been called the music of a dreamer who dwelt with nature. This work has an inescapable bucolic character, and Chausson's use of the oboe and the horns brings to mind d'Indy's *Symphony on a French Mountain Air*. The influence of Franck and Wagner are apparent — the Wagner of *Siegfried*, but this is so fleeting it does not detract from the composer's individuality in the main.

Mitropoulos's performance is moulded with exceptional care and sensitivity. It is in many ways more poetic and expressive than Stock's, but not quite as melodically expansive and objective. The dark, brooding quality he brings to the introduction conveys an aura of mystery, not alien to nature, and his slow movement a subjective beauty of mood. Throughout the playing of the orchestra marks the conductor's technical dependability. Special praise should go to the brass section, especially in its handling of that difficult choral passage at the opening of side 8 — a passage that Stock gave to the organ. It is a pity that the recording is lacking in acoustic resonance, for it robs the woodwinds of their tonal radiance. The strings fare best and their quality is always pleasant. It will be interesting to hear what Columbia does with this recording in long-playing records for its engineers have achieved some minor miracles in acoustic effects on Microgrooves. —P.H.R.

BERLIOZ: *The Roman Carnival — Overture, Op. 9; Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra*, conducted by **Willem Mengelberg**. Capitol-Telefunken disc 81002, price \$1.25.

After the FFRR version of De Sabata's performance, this recording seems rather dull and tame. It is not that the recording is bad, for actually it sounds quite good on an extended range set if the heavy bass is lessened. But outside of the drums, the percussion instruments are not clearly heard. English Decca taught us something we previously had not really appreciated — Berlioz's remarkable uses in the piece of the triangle, the tambourine and the cymbals. Mengelberg's performance is admirably paced throughout and some of the shaping of the phrases in the first half is most appealing. Yet, taken as a whole, there is not quite the sparkle and elation one expects in this music. —P.H.R.

DEBUSSY: *Printemps — Symphonic Suite; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra* conducted by **Sir Thomas Beecham**. Victor set DM-1293, two discs, price \$2.50.

IT WAS a happy thought of RCA Victor to give us yet another facet of Sir Thomas Beecham's great conductorial and musical art among the several releases with which they have chosen to commemorate his seventieth birthday. His performance of *Printemps* is one of the highlights of his great recording activity through the years. It is exquisitely played in time and in rhythm with consistently beautiful blending and balancing of tone, and all this is faithfully mirrored by excellent English recording.

Printemps is not landscape painting, as one might imagine, but the description of a human experience. Debussy said that it was his intention to express "the slow and miserable birth of beings and things in nature, their gradual blossoming and finally the joy of being born into some new life."

It is a pity that this piece is rarely heard in our concert halls. For though it is a product of Debussy's early sugary style of melodic and harmonic writing, it has many fresh and magical moments and more than a suggestion of the remarkable form that was to become one of the composer's strongest contributions to modern musical art.

Written in 1887, *Printemps* was in its original form a suite for orchestra and wordless female chorus. It was revised in 1913 for orchestra alone — hence the works' remarkable orchestration, perhaps its strongest virtue. —C.J.L.

DVORAK: *The Golden Spinning Wheel, Op. 109 (Symphonic Poem); Royal Philharmonic Orchestra*, conducted by **Sir Thomas Beecham**. Victor set DM- or M-1291, three discs, price \$4.75 and \$5.75.

DVORAK'S symphonic poems are all founded on Czech tales. Their somewhat loose construction is traceable to the composer's not limiting himself to the mere indication of their moods.

The present work, based on a fairy tale, about the king who fell in love with a beautiful maiden discovered in the forest while on a hunt, involves a stepmother who murders the girl and substitutes her own daughter in her place. The girl's eyes, hands and feet are kept by the mother. An old man offers to trade a golden spinning wheel, its distaff and spindle for these. The imposter queen makes the trade, and the old man repairs to the forest and his magic spell restores to life the girl. When the king returns from war, the spinning wheel recites the story of the queen's and her mother's wicked deeds. The king returns to the forest and finds his true love, and the queen and her mother are punished. It is a naive tale at best, but one by which Dvorak's simple heart was stirred. Yet to illustrate it tellingly in music, as Alec Robertson says in his book on the composer, "would tax even Strauss' powers."

One suspects that Beecham's interest in this score stems from its rich and glowing instrumentation, for the orchestral writing is of a high order. That the continuity of the score is somewhat taxing to the listener is due to its involved story and the fragmentary development of the poem. Karel Hoffmeister, a countryman of Dvorak's, says of his tone poems that though they are not firmly constructed, "as musical conceptions they are rich and, when the literary basis permits, or demands it, full of vivacity, temperament and dramatic power. Above all, his musical pictures excell as regards color, and for these reasons alone his last symphonic works are no unfitting climax to his life's work."

It is an experience at once bewildering and absorbing to hear Beecham play this work Bewildering, because the program is inseparable from the music, absorbing for sumptuous orchestral playing, in which the conductor's uncanny gifts for nuancing of line are ever present. The reproduction does justice to conductor and composer alike.

—P.H.R.

GOLDMARK: *The Queen of Sheba* — Ballet Music; **Boston "Pops" Orchestra**, conducted by **Arthur Fiedler**. Victor disc 12-0796, price \$1.25.

There is nothing faded about Goldmark's music today though it is dated. Strangely, there is more of the composer's native Vienna in this ballet music than the land of the Queen of Sheba. The opening with its melodic grace suggests old-fashioned ballet dancing. The middle section substantiates Goldmark's gift for tonal coloring and feeling, typical Viennese poetry of sentiment. Fiedler gives an uncommonly good performance of this music and the recording is excellent.

—P.H.R.

GRIEG: *Morning Mood* and *Solvejg's Song* from *Peer Gynt* Music; *Nocturne* and *March of the Dwarfs* from *Lyric Suite*; *Norwegian Dances Nos. 2 and 3*; *I Love Thee*; *In Spring*; *Wedding Day at Troldhaugen*; **Robin Dell Orchestra**, conducted by **Morton Gould**. Columbia set MM-824, four discs, price \$5.00, or Microgroove disc ML-2031, price \$3.85.

Whether Gould made a summer's night concert of this music or not in one of his sojourns with the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra of Philadelphia, I do not know. But this is a typical "pops" program and an album for the uninitiate and uncritical. Gould capably handles the orchestra, and Grieg, the essential lyrist, gets a veneer of sophistication, in the conductor's polished performances. The recording is exceptionally bright and clear.

—J.N.

LISZT: *Orpheus* — *Symphonic Poem No. 4* (3 sides); and **CHABRIER:** *Marche Joyeuse* (1 side); **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**, conducted by **Sir Thomas Beecham**. Victor set DM-1294, price \$2.50.

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seem pallid and dull at first to the listener. Yet, in its way, it is one of Liszt's finest and certainly his most sensitively orchestrated tone poem, and, contrary to the annotation on the envelope, a completely self-contained expression without program. Liszt wrote at great length on this score. To be sure, much of what he wrote is sheer romantic nonsense, yet his intentions are outlined clearly. An important fact, omitted by the annotator here, is the conception of the score, which occurred at a time when the composer was engaged in rehearsing Gluck's opera, *Orpheus*, for performance at Weimar.

"During those rehearsals," Liszt says, "it was well nigh impossible for me to refrain from abstracting my imagination from the point of view — touching and sublime in its simplicity — from which Gluck has considered his subject, to travel in thought back to Orpheus whose name soars so majestically and harmoniously over the most poetic of Greek myths." He tells us further that in his mind's eye was the image of an Etruscan vase in the Louvre at Paris, "representing the first poet-musician, draped in a starry robe. . ." Later, he gives the keynote to his tone poem: "Orpheus, that is to say, Art, should spread his melodious waves, his chords vibrating, like a sweet and irresistible light, over those conflicting elements which rend each other. . . Orpheus bewails Eurydice, that emblem of the Ideal engulfed by evil and suffering. . ."

Philip Hale, in his notes, finds no more in the work than Orpheus singing of the might of his art — a song that is by turns intimate, majestic, mystical. The harp is featured throughout. The work is conceived in a subdued romantic style — almost too consistently sweet. Perhaps no one but a Beecham, with his innate refinement and sensitivity, could play this music so persuasively. After the sad-sweet strains of Orpheus die away, it is almost incongruous to encounter that inimitable little masterpiece of Chabrier's — an almost rowdy, joyous march, which the composer wrote when somewhat inebriated. It overpowers the *Orpheus*, and in Sir Thomas' invigorating treatment becomes the true highlight of the set. The recording throughout is splendid. —P.H.R.

MENDELSSOHN: *Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 56 (Scotch)*; **Chicago Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by **Artur Rodzinski**. Victor set DM- or M-1285, four discs, price \$6.00 or \$7.00.

THERE is a certain pictorial enchantment to Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture* and *Scotch Symphony*. Though lacking in the sparkle and energy of the *Italian*, it is a spontaneous opus, revealing a similar technical facility and an accuracy in instrumentation. As an old admirer of this score, I welcome this new recording in which the sound is bright, spacious and realistically resonant. The buccolic character of the music gains by this quality of sound.

Rodzinski's performance is one of musically orderliness, precise timing and equitable dynamics. His opening and closing movements are excellently played; the timing in the first is nicely affirmed — a true *andante con moto*. The scherzo with its picture of rural gaiety, unquestionably inspired by the Highland pipers, has the right rugged quality but both here and in the ingratiating *Andante* the shaping of the melodies is a bit too forthright and lacking in coloration. Mitropoulos brought more poetic feeling to the slow movement and a more subtle inflection to the scherzo. Unfortunately, the recording in his case was far from satisfactory. One can dismiss the Iturbi set, for it was hardly a persuasive reading with its over-emphasis in drama. The finale of this work deserves a word — its markings, originally *Allegro guerriero*, meaning "lively in warlike or martial style" — disperses all romantic sentiment. It is a forceful, exuberant movement, exploiting the heroic qualities of the Scotch so famed in song and story.

What a superb drill-master Rodzinski is, and what a miracle he achieved in so short a time with the Chicago Symphony is shown in this set as well as in the others he made with this orchestra. In all, the range of reproduction has been unquestionably extended to the good of the music and the conductor's performance. While the recording merits a high rating, Victor's surfaces are much too uneven for my liking; swishing sounds competed with the music on occasion. —P.H.R.

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SCHUMANN: *Symphony No. 4 in D minor, Opus 120; Cleveland Orchestra*, conducted by **George Szell**. Columbia album MM-821, three discs, price \$4.00, or Microgroove disc ML-2040, price \$3.85.

THIS SYMPHONY is one of the earliest examples of the cyclical form that Franck and his pupils popularized a number of years later. In Schumann's case, I have always felt that the repetitiousness was more likely caused by a lack of inventiveness in handling the orchestral medium than by a burning desire to unify the four movements into a cohesive mass. To be sure, as an aid to preserving his illusion, the composer has specified that the four movements be played without pause, yet there are definite indications in Schumann's emotional makeup that at that time he might not have had the patience or industry to fashion a conventional symphony, so eager was he to place on paper the results of his creative fancies.

In spite of structural weaknesses and a lack of imagination in the handling of instrumentation, Schumann has installed more than a little of the naive charm of his musical personality into this piece. Undaunted by the formal requirements of his medium, he has given us a work that, while hardly a masterpiece, is agreeably listenable. Szell has adopted an impersonal, cool attitude toward his assignment, substituting precision for warmth. With the exception of a muddy passage at the beginning of the finale, his men play cleanly, with better tonal balance than in previous releases. Somehow or other, I would prefer to put up with some orchestral sloppiness, if only the conductor could have infused a bit more warmth into his efforts. The recording is good, but a little dry. —A.W.P.

SMETANA: *The Bartered Bride — Overture, Polka and Dance of the Comedians; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra*, conducted by **Sir Thomas Beecham**. Victor set DM-1274, two discs, price \$2.50.

At long last, we acquire a completely satisfying account of the Overture to *The Bartered Bride*. Not since Moerike made his version back in the late 1920s has anyone quite substantiated its "madcap vivacity", its gaiety and rustic festivity. One of

Smetana's countrymen once said that in this opera, the composer "developed to the highest artistic form an eloquent expression of the sheer joy of living". With a youthful verve belying his three score years and ten, Beecham romps through this music in a most exhilarating manner. But there is more behind his music-making than joy of living, the exacting technical skill in the playing is as remarkable as the spirit projected. There have been other recorded versions of all this music but none that have set it forth more tellingly.

The reproduction, obviously extended range, is thrillingly realistic. Here, we have clarity of instrumentation mated to dynamic wonders. One conjectures that the handling of dynamics may have been something new to the H.M.V. recording technique. —P.H.R.

STRAUSS, JOHANN, JR.: *Overture, Die Fledermaus and Overture, Zigeunerbaron; Philadelphia Orchestra*, conducted by **Eugene Ormandy**. Columbia set MX-311, two discs, price \$3.00, or Microgroove disc ML-2041, price \$3.85.

One would think that the former conductor of the pit orchestra at New York's Capitol Theater would be an ideal interpreter of these overtures. Ormandy, however, apparently unaffected by any special love for this music, carries out his assignment in a perfunctory fashion. The orchestra plays far better than he deserves, investing this familiar music with the usual Philadelphia tonal splendor. Good, virile recording. —A.W.P.

STRAUSS: *Don Juan, Op. 20; Boston Symphony Orchestra* conducted by **Serge Koussevitzky**. Victor set DM-1289, two discs, price \$2.50.

AS IF to offer some measure of solace to Koussevitzky's many admirers for the conductor's impending retirement, RCA Victor has been adding each month to the ever-growing list of postwar recordings by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. This month it's Richard Strauss's tone poem *Don Juan*—a surprise as to both selection and performance.

The selection of the piece is surprising because it is not one commonly associated with Koussevitzky. When he *has* given it to us in concert, he has often broken the

work into a series of sections without continuing impetus. What a pleasure to find on these records smoother transitions at the musical joints in the work, more musical detail, less overbowing and overblowing. The orchestra's playing is splendid and at times thrilling; and Koussevitzky's high skill in balancing a string tone is, as it so often is, especially noteworthy.

There are in this performance, however, a few of the familiar exaggerated changes of pace, string and woodwind details lost in torrents of brass sound, and patches of tone forcing past the optimum point of sonority.

The recording, for the most part a good one, is sometimes too reverberant in loud passages.

—C.J.L.

VERDI: *The Sicilian Vespers — Overture;*
La Scala Orchestra, Gino Marinuzzi,
conductor. Capitol-Telefunken disc 82000,
price \$1.25.

Of the three overtures that Verdi wrote for his operas, this one is considered the most

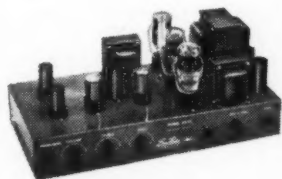
successful, while that of *La Forza del Destino* has proved more popular. There is both vigor and beauty in this music. The recording is definitely dated, though those who can lessen the bass may find it acceptable, for the record surfaces are unobtrusive. Marinuzzi's forthright direction is admirably incisive and energetic yet somewhat lacking in poetic insight.

—P.H.R.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Symphony No. 6 in B minor (Pathétique);* **NBC Symphony Orchestra,** conducted by **Arturo Toscanini.** Victor Vinylite set DV- or V-27, five discs, price \$11.00 or \$12.00, and Set WDM-1281, five 45 rpm. discs, price \$5.25.

TO those who believe they know this symphony intimately, the present performance will provide a new experience in music-making. Not only is it illuminating in its incandescent elucidation but unparalleled in its deep sincerity and probing feeling.

I first heard Toscanini play the *Pathétique* in 1941, at which time I took a recording



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from the air. Subsequent performances confirmed my belief that he was continually rediscovering the music. That driving intensity of 1941 gradually gave way to a supreme poise. Later, I heard at the Maestro's home his ill-fated recording of the work with the Philadelphia Orchestra. It impressed me greatly, but on the evidence of the present performance the delay proves all to the good, for Toscanini's renditions of the march and the finale have grown in stature and in thought. There are those who deny the heart element in Toscanini's interpretations, those who fail to perceive his uncanny gift for inflection of line and phrase, and those who feel that his is an insatiable dramatic intensity. To them, this performance is both a rebuttal and a repudiation.

One does not listen to an inch of the introduction before realizing the depth of feeling, the beauty of the conductor's playing. Here he contrives a matchless aura of mystery and sentient warmth. With the entrance of the songful first theme (side 2) we find the melodic flow substantiated by a true *andante*, not an *adagio* as Furtwaengler and others use. The tenderness and repose at the end of this side shows how deeply the heart element can be met by Toscanini, yet without exaggeration. Rightfully the development section (side 3) confirms the dramatic intensity of the composer. It is both powerful and stimulating without the usual theatrical flair pursued by many. That ingratiating second movement with its perfect 5/4 meter becomes a vehicle of singing strings, its gracefulness handled with affectionate care.

In the march, Toscanini shows his extraordinary orchestral skill, building through suppressed excitement in the opening half to a powerfully stimulating climactic second part. The finale is a revelation in its compassionate beauty. There is the utmost repose and a dramatic strength that conveys the deepest anguish. I have listened four times to this performance in the company of four musicians and all were greatly impressed and moved.

To date, I have heard only the 78 pressing, which is on vinylite with unfortunately ticking surfaces. The recording, made in Carnegie Hall, matches in refinement, brilliance and acoustic liveness the best of any existent extended range releases. This is

Victor engineering, in my estimation, at its best; hence I look forward to its reproduction on the 45 discs. —P.H.R.

WOLF-FERRARI: *The Four Peasants — Intermezzo; The Secret of Suzanne — Overture; The Curious Women — Minuet and Furlana; The Jewels of the Madonna — Intermezzo Act III; The Tonhalle Orchestra, Zuerich, conducted by the Composer.* London Record set LA-33, two discs, price \$5.00.

What a delightful package of Italian operatic gems this is. Wolf-Ferrari's melodies are fresh, lyrically beguiling, and pleasantly sentimental. The overture to *The Secret of Suzanne* has a Mozartean sparkle and humor. The excerpts from *The Four Peasants* and *The Curious Women* have charm of sentiment, and the familiar intermezzo of *The Jewels of the Madonna*, based on the baritone's serenade in Act II, has a true Neapolitan carefreeness. The composer, as conductor, remains a pleasurable surprise. I've never heard the intermezzo from *The Jewels* played with such lyrical buoyancy. In all the excerpts, he achieves a welcome spontaneity as well as refinement. The recording is realistic with considerable spaciousness in sound, perhaps a bit too much for some of the more refined passages.

—P.H.R.



MOZART: *Flute and Harp Concerto in C major, K. 299; Rene Le Roy* (flutist), *Lily Laskine* (harpist), *Royal Philharmonic Orchestra*, conducted by **Sir Thomas Beecham.** Victor set DM- or M-1292, three discs, price \$4.75 or \$5.75.

THE GENIUS of Mozart was such that even when his heart was not in a composition he could conjure a delicate and alluring charm. Einstein says this "work is an example of the finest French salon music," which in itself is recommendation enough. One should remember Mozart wrote the concerto for two amateurs — the Duc de Guines and his daughter. And though he regarded both as capable performers, he did not make great demands on their technical

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(Nicolai)
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With Chorus and Orchestra of the
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skill and he wrote the work in the simplest key signature. The flute and the harp were for their day fashionable instruments for which Mozart had no great love. However, he handles the interplay between them very well, but the writing for the harp is not too strong, and in the enchanting *andantino* it is the flute which gets the better part. The whole composition is French in spirit and the final rondo, a *tempo di gavotta*, has, as W. R. Anderson said in *The Gramophone*, "the sense of feather-light wit of the dance, and the world that had no thought of the Revolution."

Of the recording and performance, let Anderson speak, for this past month he has been both near and dear to us, having spent a weekend in our home. He has said: "Nothing could well be more pellucid than this recording, which in scope and size and piquancy seems the perfect setting for the work. Needless to praise the direction: Sir Thomas remains our tip-top choice for such writing." And ours too, for Sir Thomas knows as few others how to color Mozart's phrases. An older recording, made in 1937, featured Lily Laskine at the harp. Sir Thomas was wise to re-engage her for this performance for she has a style suited to the music. He was also wise in his choice of Le Roy as the flutist, for the latter has a most suitable tonal fluidity. —P.H.R.

PAGANINI-WILHELMJ: *Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 6* and **KREISLER:** *Recitativo and Scherzo Caprice (for unaccompanied violin)*; **Ruggerio Ricci** (violin) and the **Lamoureux Orchestra**, conducted by **Eugene Bigot** (in the concerto). Vox set 649, three discs, price \$4.75.

IT is quite superfluous to comment upon the qualities of the Paganini Concerto. If you are a violinist or an *aficionado* of that instrument, most probably you are sincerely attached to its fustian grandeurs, and will brook no unfavorable remarks concerning its shallow emotional content, its over-long, complicated cadenza, and complete reliance upon technical fireworks. Ricci, who is one of our most talented young American violinists, has employed the Wilhelmj transcription, a condensation of the lengthy original into one movement of about twenty minutes duration. This is the version usually played in concert. It is not as satisfying,

however, as the arrangement of the first movement which was made by Kreisler and recorded by him with the Philadelphia Orchestra (Victor set M-361).

The dull, lifeless recording, made in Paris last year, has taken most of the spirit from Ricci's performance. I have heard him perform the piece under other conditions and know he can make it really thrilling, for it is well suited to his style of playing. Kreisler's little piece for unaccompanied violin, the filler on the last side, comes through more successfully, though here again more brilliance from the engineers would not have been amiss. —A.W.P.



MENDELSSOHN: *Octet in E Flat Major, Op. 20*; **Pro Musica Chamber Group**. Vox set 651, three discs, price \$4.75.

THE MENDELSSOHN OCTET is a dream piece, a master's masterwork. It is by turns soaring song, impassioned emotional expression, gossamer and fairylike evocation, incandescent joy. There has never been another piece quite like it.

Composed when Mendelssohn was but sixteen years old, the Octet is perhaps the high point of this composer's output. Immaculately tailored, the piece has for Mendelssohn a unique depth of personal lyricism that places it alongside the peaks of chamber music written during the first 50 years of the 19th century.

According to available information, this is the first time that the complete work has been readily obtainable in this country. Up to now only orchestrations of the familiar Scherzo movement have been listed in domestic catalogues.

Scored for four violins, two violas and two 'cellos, the work for the most part is well played by the Pro Musica Chamber Group, a French organization of string players. It should be said, however, that there are occasions when the sound of the violins is excessively dry; but this may be due to the recording which appears to be a little pinched at the top end of the scale. The surfaces of these records are acceptable and better than many Vox has offered. —C.J.L.

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MOZART: *Sonata in C major, K. 296;* **Jascha Heifetz** (violin) and **Emanuel Bay** (piano). Victor set DM-1290, two discs, price \$2.50.

SOME years back, Heifetz and Bay played Mozart's sonatas, K. 378 and K. 454 (Victor set 343), in which the balance of the recording was poorly contrived so that the violin submerged the piano. The performances were far less appealing than this one, as the violinist interjected continuous tonal swells in the melodies which were alien to the Mozart style. Here, we have better balanced recording and a performance from Heifetz that is both sensitive and urbane. His tone is somewhat smaller than in his familiar encore-piece style, perhaps more circumspect would be the way to describe it. The consistent beauty of tone and the technical perfection of the playing of both performers makes this a most enjoyable performance. Mozart did not make his violin part in this work the main participant and the sonata could be played alone on the piano, but definitely to the loss of much of its charm which Heifetz and his violin contribute. Those who do not own the Goldberg-Kraus performance (Society Issue) would do well to hear this one. The music has "the touching appeal of adolescence", as Eric Blom has said, a quality with Mozart which is always winning. —P.H.R.



BACH: (trans. Busoni): *Chaconne from Sonata in D mi. for Solo Violin;* **Egon Petri** (piano). Columbia set MX-313, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

OTHERS may be equipped to play Busoni's Bach arrangements but none have a better reason than Egon Petri. Not only was he taught the works by Busoni, but their very existence stems from Petri influence. It was the pianist's mother who suggested that Busoni make the transcriptions. The purist may disagree with these transcriptions, but we feel that a good piece of music can be subjected to various different technical instrumentations with good results, and in the case of old music often to its wider assimilation by modern listeners.

Busoni's transcriptions of Bach are in their own way "triumphs of musicianship." They serve the virtuoso pianist who commands depth of expression and they serve Bach in a manner one suspects the composer might have approved. To be sure, the famous unaccompanied *Chaconne* for solo violin is quite a different matter than the Busoni transcriptions of Bach's organ works and concertos. Here, Busoni has had to fill in the harmony and completely metamorphose the composition. The results may not resemble Bach as heard on the violin, or as heard on Segovia's guitar, but they are nonetheless effective and contrived with musical insight, circumspection and taste.

Petri's performance recalls the "evoking hands" of his teacher. There is poise and rare artistic sobriety in his interpretation. This is music-making of the highest order, deserving of a wide audience. The recording is both lifelike and mellow. —P.H.R.

CHERUBINI: *Sonata No. 3* (two 10-inch discs), and *Medea — Storm-Prelude to Act III* (one 12-inch disc); **Heinz Herschmann** (piano).

While one lauds the formation of a Cherubini Society to honor a composer who in his day contributed much to dramatic music, the present offerings do not auspiciously represent him. The best of Cherubini lies in his operatic music and his one symphony. His orchestral writing shows his skill in contrapuntal technique, harmonic richness and instrumentation.

Cherubini's keyboard and chamber music is somewhat constrained and dry. He needed the stimulus of dramatic situations and the broader medium of the orchestra. The sonata, boasting only two short movements, is typical of much 18th-century *Gebrauchsmusik*. True, it has facility and smooth flowing lines, but while the second movement, *Rondo-andantino*, possesses some elegance and grace, neither it nor the opening *Allegro comodo* conveys any marked individuality. Mr. Herschmann plays it very well indeed, his clean-cut, fluent style seems well suited to the music. The prelude from the opera, *Medea*, is ill served by the piano and just does not come off successfully.

The recording has been capably managed but the vinylite pressings of my copies are rather gritty. —P.H.R.

LISZT: *Ricordanza (Transcendental Etude No. 9)*; **Egon Petri** (piano). Columbia disc 72792-D, price \$1.00, or Microgroove 7" disc 3-123, price 90c.

As Petri is justly regarded as one of the foremost interpreters of Liszt, one would like to suggest that he record all of the *Transcendental Etudes*. No finer recommendation of this record can be made than quoting from Edward Sackville West's *Personal Preferences* (June 1948), in which he said: "I will end with a piece of romantic music that has, perhaps, no great intrinsic value, but delights the ear through the charm exercised by wonderful virtuosity. I mean Liszt's *Ricordanza Etude* in the recording of Egon Petri. . . the pianist whom I consider the greatest of his age".

Not alone is the playing of this music a delight to the ear, but so too is the mellow sound of the piano and the quiet surface of the Columbia pressing. —P.H.R.

RAVEL: *Jeux d'eau*; and **FAURE:** *Impromptu No. 2 in F minor, Op. 31*; **Alexander Brailowsky** (piano). Victor disc 12-0794, price \$1.25.

RAVEL'S *Jeux d'eau* owes something to Liszt though its poetic beauty is more sophisticated. Had Liszt not written his *Fountains of the Villa d'Este*, Ravel might have given a similar title to his piece. It suggests the play of a fountain in some formal garden and Brailowsky treats it in a formal manner. His is a technically efficient performance, somewhat rhythmically mechanical. One recalls Cortot's freer treatment, suggesting the variation of falling waters in the wind.

The Fauré is a brilliant work which exploits the best qualities of the pianist — virtuoso effects which he handles with clean-cut technique. There is a suggestion of the tarantella in this music, broken up by poetic reflections typical of Fauré.

The tonally lifelike recording is marred by an aggressive surface in the Ravel. —J.N.

WAGNER: *Die Walkure — Magic Fire Spell*; and **MOZART:** *Rondo from Haffner Serenade, K. 250*; **First Piano Quartet**. Victor disc 12-0766, price \$1.25.

These are two of the best arrangements that the First Piano Quartet has recorded to

date. Wagner's fire music is surprisingly effective and the Mozart loses little of its charm. The reproduction offers realistic piano tone. —J.N.



BARBER: *Sleep, Now*; and **HAGEMAN:** *At the Well*; **Marilyn Cotlow** (soprano) with Claire Stafford at the piano. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1467, price \$1.00.

While it is laudable for an American soprano to select two American songs for her record debut with a new company (Miss Cotlow will be recalled for her delightful singing in *The Telephone*) the wisdom in the choice of her selections remains debatable. The Barber song, a setting of a James Joyce poem, asks for more expressive treatment than she gives it. Both the poem and the musical setting are subjective, requiring considerable feeling to do it justice. Hageman's *At the Well*, a familiar encore, is more suitable to the soprano, and certainly she sings it more easily and naturally. The piano accompaniments are well played and the clear recording effects a good balance between the singer and the instrument. —J.N.

BRUCKNER: *Mass in E minor*; **Ham-burg State Opera Choir and Orchestra, Max Thurn**, director. Capitol-Telefunken set EEL 2504, five discs, price \$7.50.

IN HIS ARTICLE on Bruckner in our June 1946 issue, H. C. Robbins Landon said of the *E minor Mass*: "This curious work has a somewhat archaic flavor, owing to the use of old church modes as a thematic basis of many of its sections. However, it is a work that displays many of the composer's strong points. The *Kyrie*, with its

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characteristic *crescendo* so effectively employed, is one of the noblest pieces of church music ever written. The orchestration calls for only woodwinds and brasses, which undoubtedly adds to the peculiar old-world flavor. There are two recordings: an extraordinary performance by wind players of the Berlin State Opera and the Aachen Cathedral Choir, under the direction of Th. Rehmann (Victor set 596), and an admirable one by the windplayers and the chorus of the Hamburg State Opera, direction of Max Thurn (Telefunken discs) . . . The Hamburg performance deserves praise, but I find it lacking in the assurance of the Aachen one. Thurn's *Kyrie*, however, is every bit the equal of Rehmann's but in the latter sections the quality of his performance deteriorates a little. There is greater clarity in the reproduction of the Aachen set."

Mr. Landon omitted telling us that the Gloria in the present set is cut. Though we concur with his opinions in the main, it would seem to us that the recording is about equal and in the case of the present pressing, with its smooth surfaces, it has an edge on the other. It speaks well for the chorus of an opera house that it can enter into the spirit of a religious work like this so completely. Those who missed the previous set are urged to hear this one. This is music which is truly lofty and deeply devotional. —P.H.R.

CILEA: *Adriana Lecouvreur* — *Io son l'umile ancella*; and **MOZART:** *Don Giovanni* — *Batti, batti, o bel Masetto*; **Licia Albanese** (soprano) with RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by D. Marzollo. Victor disc 12-658, price \$1.25.

The Cilea aria is sung with much feeling and tonal fullness; and with more dramatic intensity than the recent Tassinari version (Cetra). Both versions are worth hearing, and a choice might be hard to make. Tassinari brings a sweetness of tone which makes her emotion as appealing as Albanese's intensity.

Albanese's Zerlina is hardly the simple country girl, though one would not rate her a worldly creature. The soprano is ever the exemplary musician but her style in this aria suggests a sophisticated lady. The conductor is more at home in Cilea than in Mozart. Good recording. —J.N.

DEBUSSY: *Trois Ballades de Francois Villon*; **RAVEL:** *Don Quichotte a Dulcinee*. **Martial Singher** (baritone) with Columbia Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra, conducted by **Maurice Abravanel**. Columbia MM-820, three 10-inch discs, \$3.90, or ML 4152, LP disc, \$3.85 (coupled with *French Operatic Arias*).

DEBUSSY'S *Villon Ballades*, dating from 1910, are thoroughly mature and masterful examples of his vocal style. Written originally for voice and piano, they were later orchestrated by the composer. The poems are famous in themselves, the kaleidoscopic *Ballad of Villon to his Mistress*, the tender and reverent *Ballad written by Villon at the Request of His Mother to Pray to Our Lady* and the swaggering *Ballad of the Women of Paris*. By fortunate coincidence HMV recently released another recording of these songs, sung by Pierre Bernac to the piano of Francis Poulenc (DB 6385-86). I say this is fortunate because it gives us an excellent opportunity to study the songs in the two versions, in both cases sung with style and understanding. Neither of the singers is notable for sheer vocal beauty, though in this respect Singher easily has the edge. Of the two, Singher's approach is the more modest, and I feel that his penetration is deeper. Bernac has a way of mouthing his words which brings them out very distinctly but not without a suggestion of affectation. An indication of where this leads in the matter of *tempo* is given by the fact that his version requires three twelve-inch sides. Despite the delicacy and color of the orchestrations, I find myself preferring the piano as a partner to the voice, especially when such a musician as Poulenc is at the keyboard.

This comparison has driven me back to the older recordings of Panzéra, with orchestra (HMV DA 4810) and Teyte, with Cortot at the piano (Victor M-322). The former gives us the second and third ballads and the latter only the third. I think Miss Teyte is at a disadvantage simply in being a woman, for these are distinctly masculine sentiments she is voicing, and the very lightness of the music seems to call for a more robust quality than she can give. On the other hand, though robust is hardly the word for Panzéra's tone, his singing has a tenderness and dedication, a complete and

easy mastery that sets his disc above all the others.

The *Don Quichotte* songs, set to three poems by Paul Morand, are late Ravel, fastidious in craftsmanship and not without expressiveness and appeal, especially in the second song, though hardly the best this composer left us. Singher has an especial fondness for these songs, as one of them is dedicated to him, and as it was he who introduced them to the world. It was he, too, who recorded the cycle in the presence of the composer before the premiere in 1934. Only the fact that the earlier recording (Victor 4404-5 or HMV DA 4865-66) is no longer on the American market seems to account for his wanting to do them again, unless it be that he was troubled by one or two not perfectly secure tones. The old discs still sound very well indeed, a shade clearer than the new, though not quite so powerful. —P.L.M.

DeKOVEN-SCOTT: *Oh, Promise Me*; and **ROMBERG:** *Serenade from The Student Prince*; **Jan Peerce** (tenor) with Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by Warner Bass. Victor disc 12-0795, price \$1.25.

Mr. Peerce revives memories of his music hall days but the results definitely suggest he's outgrown the style. The Romberg *Serenade* is not without apparent effort. As for the other song, it never was intended for a man's voice and even Peerce can't make me forget its association with some rather doleful wedding ceremonies. —J.N.

THE GERMAN NIGHTINGALE: *Potpourri — Parts 1 and 2; Funiculi Funicula* (Denza); *Parla — Waltz* (Arditi); *Jubilate* (Silcher); *Village Swallows — Waltz* (Josef Strauss); **Erna Sack** (soprano) with Orch. of the German Opera House, Berlin, Willy Czernik, conductor. Capitol Telefunken set 2500, three discs, price \$5.00.

STRAUSS, Johann: *Voices of Spring*; and **ALABIEFF:** *The Nightingale*; **Erna Sack**, with the same orchestra. Capitol Telefunken disc 81000, price \$1.25.

Perhaps the keynote to Erna Sacks' popularity lies in the fact, as one friend of ours remarked, that she conveys always that feeling of having "a heck of a good time". Her coloratura tricks are both freakish and "featish", to coin an adjective.

The album begins in a rather sad way — the potpourri is a conglomerate affair which scarcely serves the singer to advantage. The Denza song has gaiety and animation and should have been sung straight with its chorus. The pauses for ascents into *alt* suggest someone was guilty of a mean trick that caused the singer to scream. There's plenty of good singing in the other pieces, most appreciable in the German folkslied, *Jubilate*, where the high, high notes are omitted.

In *Voices of Spring*, Miss Sack sings so well that I, for one, wish she had omitted the fireworks. But what skyrockets they are — a round, full G sharp above high C, a similar high F sharp near the end, and a teaser in quick scale steps running to high B above high C. All of this makes one dizzy. Alabieff's familiar *The Nightingale* is given similar treatment and balalaikas have been added to the orchestra. If you want a sample disc of Miss Sack's work, this one seems as good as any.

The recording in the album and on the single disc are lifelike. I wouldn't guesstimate at frequency range but the reproduction favorably vies with a lot of the best domestic releases. —J.N.

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GOUNOD: *Faust* (Complete opera); **Georg Boue** (Marguerite), **B. Bannerman** (Martha), **Huguette Saint-Arnaud** (Siebel), **Georges Nore** (Faust), **Roger Bourdin** (Valentine), **Roger Rico** (Mephistopheles), **Ernest Frank** (Wagner), **Hubert Dawkes** and **Herbert Dawson** (organists), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and chorus, conducted by **Sir Thomas Beecham**. Victor sets DM-1300 and 1301, 8 discs each, price \$11 each, or manual set \$12 each.

I RECALL vividly a performance of *Faust* at the Metropolitan in the days when Beecham was conducting it there. I don't remember much about the singing, but I can never forget the revelations in the orchestra pit that night. *Faust* has always been the super-*prima donna* opera *par excellence*, for it contains a grateful part for each of the principal types of voice. In its heyday a performance with less than four world celebrities was hardly to be thought of, and it is no wonder that with the singers to do it justice it led all the repertory in popularity. But here came Beecham to show us that even without vocalists of "golden age" calibre, the opera could hold its own by virtue of its delicate but masterly scoring.

Something similar happens in this recording. The cast boasts no Eames, no de Reszke, no Maurel and no Plancon, but it brings us orchestral playing of the first order, and if it achieves sufficiently wide distribution it should cause some revision of the patronizing attitude so easily assumed in considering the gentle Gounod and his masterpiece. Not that the singers in the cast are bad — none of them is less than competent, and none indulges in the kind of excesses we have had from certain celebrities in operatic recordings. Mme. Boué, the Marguerite, has a voice of freshness and some charm, and she sings with a vocal line none too usual in this day. M. Rico, the Mephistopheles, has a fine ample instrument and the kind of swagger the part wants, while Bourdin is musical and thoroughly routined as Valentine. M. Noré, the Faust, has more power than sweetness, and he gives the impression of being not quite mature, though he does some passages very well indeed — particularly where ringing high tones are called for. I care less for Mlle. Saint-Arnaud as Siebel, for the voice is really too

open to be very interesting. Happily most of these artists are French; we are not bothered by the usual assortment of accents.

The real reason, I suspect, why these good people fail to make a stronger impression is a matter of recording balance. While the voices never swamp or cover up the orchestra, and not a detail of the scoring is missed, the singers are too much *with us* — we want a little distance, a little stage effect. Nor is the reproduction altogether free from distortion — another indication that the microphones may have been too close. In the choral and orchestral portions of the score, however, the effect could hardly be better, and there is so much color and shading in the old war horses — the *Soldiers' Chorus* and the *Kermesse Waltz* — that they become transformed into something new and exciting. And the postlude to the *Garden Scene* (a true stroke of genius) can rarely have sounded so tremendous.

Some Omissions

The score in this performance has been shorn of some of the traditions which have grown up around it with the years. Beecham, we are told, has returned to Gounod's original intentions. The famous baritone aria, *Avant de quitter ces lieux* (or *Dio possente or Even bravest heart*) is conspicuous by its absence, for it is not to be found in early printed editions of the opera. It was added for an English performance in 1864, in order to make the part of Valentine fat enough for the celebrated baritone Charles Santley. It seems to have struck Gounod that he had not made enough of the *Andante* melody in the introduction to his opera, and so he put it to this use. The ballet, the *Walpurgis Night* scene and the spinning scene are also admitted, as they generally are in performances, and there are a few minor cuts in the scenes given.

This is the third "complete" *Faust* recording, and indeed the second led by Sir Thomas. His first effort, made a good many years ago, used an English text and an English cast, and was never released in this country (English Columbia DX 88-103). As to its quality I have no first hand knowledge. I do, however, know the Paris recording made under the direction of Henri Busser (Victor M-105) a friend and pupil of Gounod. Recorded around 1930, the set

hardly meets the best standards of the present day, yet it is by no means bad, and it can still be listened to with pleasure. Its generally excellent cast includes at least one really great and classic performance, the Mephistopheles of Marcel Journet, a veteran of many "golden-age" *Fausts*. And if Busser's reading lacks Beecham's imagination and penetration, it is vital and generally well paced.

—P.L.M.

IRISH BALLADS: *The Galway Shawl* (Hayward); *The Inniskilling Dragoon* (Haywood); *The Castle of Dromore* (Hayward); *Trottin' to the Fair* (Stanford); *County Kildare Fragment* (Hayward); *My Lagan Love* (Harty); *The Gartan Mother's Lullaby* (Hughes); **Richard Haward** (tenor) with harp accompaniment by Aileen MacArdle. London Records — Rex set RA-1, three 10-inch discs, price \$3.75.

In Ireland and England, they will tell you that Richard Hayward is unrivalled in his field. He, like our own Burl Ives, travels around collecting ditties. The *County Kildare Fragment* is an example, part of which he sings in Gaelic making one wonder at the words, considering the few lines heard in English. Most of the ballads are sung in Hayward's own arrangements, but there is a lovely lullaby arranged by Hughes and the late Sir Hamilton Harty's arrangement of *My Lagan Love*. The songs have a quaint, almost old world atmosphere to them, much sentiment but simply expressed. *The Castle of Dromore* is quite captivating and so too is *Trottin' to the Fair*. The first is a tender lullaby, the latter a song of humor. Hayward's voice is an agreeable one, more the light baritone than the tenor (he uses no high notes in these songs), and his diction leaves nothing to be desired. Miss MacArdle's harp accompaniments are simply and effectively handled. The recording is quite lifelike, as though the singer were in the room.

—J.N.

NEVIN: *Little Boy Blue*; and **MALOTTE:** *Sing a Song of Sixpence*; **Christopher Lynch** (tenor) with Eugene Bossart at the piano. Columbia 10-inch disc 4552-M, price 75c.

This is a record for the children. Mr. Lynch's diction is perfect and his singing of

the Nevin setting of Eugene Field's tearjerker is unaffected. Malotte's arrangement of the old nursery rhyme is a character piece, which the tenor capably handles. Good recording.

—J.N.

PUCCINI: *La Tosca* — *Or Lasciami al lavoro* (2 parts); **VERDI:** *La Traviata* — *Parigi, o cara*; **MASSENET:** *Werther* — *Dividerci dobbiam* (finale Act I); **Ferruccio Tagliavini** (tenor) and **Pia Tassinari** (soprano); with Italian Radio Symphony Orch., conducted by Arturo Basile and Mario Rossi. Cetra set 14, three discs, price \$8.50 (automatic).

THE TAGLIAVINIS unite in three operatic duets with varying success. In close harmonic work like the *Traviata*, their two voices do not blend well. There is a sweetness of sound to their individual singing, but the timbre and production differs. These are better recordings of Tagliavini's voice than Victor has given us, as there are no explosively emitted top tones. The tenor is at his best in most of his work, and some of his pianissimo singing is indeed ingratiating. It is rare that one hears Cavaradossi's air, *Qual' occhi al mondo*, sung with such restraint.

The *Tosca* duet begins after her aria *Non la sopiri la nostra casetta* and continues to the end of the scene. Tassinari handles her part convincingly though we obtain very little idea of her real conception of the role. She is less fiery than most in her jealousy but her final instruction "that no pious lady, no fair or dusky beauty shall be admitted here" has the right insistence. The opening phrases of *Parigi, o cara* promise much more than the ensemble singing brings to us.

The long duet from Massenet's *Werther* is especially suitable to the two singers and they bring to it both feeling and beauty of tone. Massenet's *Werther* contains some of the best music he wrote, but its libretto is assuredly one of the most incongruous and futile ever devised. This scene at the end of Act 1 is typical. Werther, who has only just met Charlotte (Carlotta in Italian), brings her home, makes her a violent declaration of love, and becomes petulant when she informs him of her mother's last wish that she marry Albert. Werther's frustrations throughout the opera ends in his suicide. The music of this scene, with its dulcet opening themes

suggesting the moonlit night, is steeped in romantic sentiment.

The orchestral direction is competently handled throughout and the well balanced recording remains completely satisfying.

—J.N.

STRAUSS, John: *Fuehlingsstimmen; Himmelischer Walzer; Der Fledermaus — Spiel ich die Umschuld* **SCHMIDSEDER:** *Das ist das Geheimnis von Wein;* **LEHAR:** *Die Lustige Witwe—Villialied;* **WEHLE:** *Anni-Ein Glas Champagner; Elsie Mayerhofer* (soprano) with Radio Orch., Beromuenster, **Paul Burkhard**, conductor. London Record set LA-75, three discs, price \$7.00.

Billed as "The Viennese Nightingale" Miss Mayerhofer has more often than not a sweetness of tone that belies the famous bird when heard at close range. She is not so sensational as Erna Sack, but musically more satisfying. Further coloratura tricks are, on the whole, less disrupting to the music. The *Fledermaus* excerpt has charm and the several Viennese selections are appealing. For those who like "adventures in alt" Miss Mayerhofer provides them. Though her vocal work in this set is not all on the same level (meaning tonal quality not range) it is never unpleasant. The clear, clean recording and quiet record surfaces add to one's enjoyment.

—J.N.

STRAUSS: *Salome — Final Scene;* **Ljuba Welitsch** (soprano) with the **Metropolitan Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Fritz Reiner**. Columbia set MX-316, two discs, price \$3.00.

THE POTENTIALITIES of a recording by Ljuba Welitsch and Fritz Reiner of this music were enthusiastically recognized when the two made their debuts last February at the Metropolitan Opera House. Since that time, the question has been whether or not Columbia would successfully capture the sound of that remarkable performance.

It is a pleasure to be able to report that most of the final section of this exciting work beginning *Ah! Du wolltest mich nicht deinen Mund kuessen lassen, Jochanaan* has been recorded with noteworthy clarity and presence. Only in the monitoring of the

tremendous orchestral crescendo following the final words of *Salome* does the recording fall short of excellence.

There are two cuts in this recording: (1) the short dialogue between Herod and Herodias, which had it been recorded would have occurred at the end of side 3; and (2) Herod's final words, *Man toete dieses Weib*, that give to the listener that complete feeling of the drama's finality.

Miss Welitsch's singing is simply glorious; her handling of the text an extraordinary dramatic experience. I can recall but one other comparable vocal or musical performance of this scene either in the opera house or on records. That one was an abbreviated version, acoustically recorded by Emmy Destinn.

Mr. Reiner's interpretation of this music is as sensational on these records as it was in the opera house. And his conducting is pure alchemy. He has transformed the base metal of the Metropolitan's dispirited, undisciplined orchestra into the gold of what sounds for all the world like an honest-to-goodness, first-class organization. —C.J.L.

SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT: *Swing low, Sweet Chariot; Ev'ry Time I Feel de Spirit; I Got a Home in dat Rock; 'O Gimme Your Han'; No More Auction Block; Great Gittin' up Mornin'; Hear de Lambs a-cryin'; Goin' to Ride up in de Chariot; I'll Hear de Trumpet; Ezekiel Saw de Wheel; Poor Wayfarin' Stranger; Hammer Song; Dere's Man Goin' Roun'; I Know de Lord; Git on Board; Lil' David.* **Paul Robeson** (baritone), and Lawrence Brown (tenor and piano). Columbia MM-918, four 10-inch discs, \$4.90, or ML 2038, 10-inch LP disc, \$3.85.

EACH side in this set includes two spirituals, the first a solo by Robeson, and the second a duet with Brown. The Robeson voice remains one of the richest and noblest sounds in any human throat, and his singing here is for the most part quiet and reserved. If he has not quite all the simple dignity and fervor that marked his earliest records he is still one of our most convincing singers of his type of music. The recording, is very satisfactory.

—P.L.M.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Eugen Onegin* — *Tatiana's Letter Scene*; Ljuba Welitsch (soprano) with The Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Walter Suesskind. Columbia set MX-310, two discs, price \$3.00.

This set contains one of the great operatic recordings of the last two decades. It preserves a rare performance in which a superb singing actress completely loses her identity and becomes the character she portrays. One has only to listen to Ljuba Welitsch's excited singing as she decides to write Onegin and her heartfelt sigh when she takes her pen in hand to realize that one is in the presence of a memorable musico-dramatic event.

The recording is lifelike, but balance between singer and orchestra could have been better. The playing of the Philharmonia is fine, the oboe and horn solos being especially affecting. Walter Suesskind's sympathetic conducting simply enhances the effectiveness of this set. If you love singing, this is a set worth buying and cherishing. —C.J.L.

VERDI: *Don Carlos* — *Dormiro sol nel manto mio regal*; **Cesare Siepi** (bass) and orchestra conducted by Arturo Basile. Cetra-Soria disc BB-2068, price \$1.84.

BOITO: *Mefistofele* — *Son lo spirito che nega* and **VERDI:** *I Vespri Siciliani* — *O tu Palermo*; **Cesare Siepi** (bass) an orchestra conducted by Arturo Basile. Cetra-Soria disc BB-2069, price \$1.84.

JUDGING by these records, Cesare Siepi is one of the most promising of the current crop of Italian basses and baritones. He has a lighter, more flexible voice than Pinza or Pasero, yet it is sufficiently full-bodied and manly to realize the requirements of his characterizations, which are in the best of taste, both musically and dramatically. These three arias, of which only the *Don Carlos* is available domestically — and that in an extremely poor, truncated version by Chaliapin on the Victor Heritage series, are among the best in the bass repertoire. The *Don Carlos* aria is complete, beginning with the long orchestral introduction and the recitative, *Ella giammai m'amo*. The Boito excerpt is the "whistling ballad" that Chaliapin once recorded at an actual per-

formance. Pasero's version on HMV disc DB11304 is the best of the modern versions, though both Neroni and Siepi provide spirited competition. *O tu Palermo* is one of those infectious Verdi melodies that sticks relentlessly in one's head for days at a time.

—A.W.P.

Recent Importations

An outstanding release that should have wide appeal is Dvorak's *Othello Overture* (HMV discs JOX7/8, Czech Phil. Orch., Kubelik), an exceptionally powerful piece of music that is practically unknown in this country — partly, I suspect, due to the difficulty in obtaining the orchestral material. The last of a cycle of three overtures that include *In der Natur* (recorded by Stock, Chicago Sym. Orch.—Victor M-975) and the popular *Carnival* (Talich, Czech Phil. Orch. on Victor 13710) *Othello* is a solid, extremely satisfying creation. Not particularly impressive at first hearing, for the composer has avoided the obvious and the spectacular, the overture improves immeasurably with familiarity. The admirable ensemble of the Czech Philharmonic, second to none for the ravishing beauty of its mellow tonal quality, has been well preserved by the recording engineers.

A recent issue of Reynaldo Hahn's *C major Sonata* for violin and piano (Pathé PDT 183/4), tastefully played by Denise Soriano and Denise Sternburg, recalls that here is a musician not sufficiently known or appreciated in this country. Certain Hahn songs are very popular here, but of his extended instrumental efforts we hear practically nothing. Hahn was something of a prodigy, performing and composing with conspicuous facility from an early age; in fact, I would venture to say that it was all too easy, for despite a definite surface charm, much of his output is extremely shallow and inconsequential. There are a few more ambitious works, none of which is world-shattering, all of which show the composer's personality at its best. This sonata, for instance, has much to recommend it in the way of ingratiating melody. Quite a favorite of mine is the *Concerto Provençal* for

flute, clarinet, bassoon, horn and strings (HMV discs DA4993/5 Chamber Orch., **Cubradous**). One might also investigate the *Piano Concerto* (Pathé PAT86/88 Tagliafero & orch., Hahn), a charming, unassuming exercise for keyboard and supporting group, which definitely grows on one.

A Neglected Mozart Concerto

A Mozart piano concerto that has received very little attention from recitalists or recording companies is the *C major, K. 503*, which is now available by **Edwin Fischer** and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by **Josef Krips** (HMV discs DB6604/7). In fact, the story goes that some have thought the concerto "had a curse upon it", for when it was written, in 1786, Mozart's youngest son had just died, and the composer was in serious financial difficulties. The funds he had counted on from the performance of the concerto did not materialize, nor was his widow able to get it published after his death. When Artur Schnabel and George Szell played this work in Vienna in 1934, it was discovered that they had given the first performance in that city since Mozart's time.

Certainly, there is nothing lacking in the music. I would class it as one of Mozart's best efforts in the form, far more full-bodied than some of the most popular. There is an occasional awkwardness of phrasing that seems alien to Mozart, but with that awkwardness comes a strength that, due to the untimely death of the composer, receives its logical fulfillment in the works of Beethoven. Fischer does a fine job with his part; his orchestral support, however, is far from ideal. Fortunately, it does not detract too much from the over-all enjoyment of the recording.

A short, contemplative piece by Mozart, the *Masonic Funeral Music, K. 477* (Eng. Col. LX1155 Vienna Phil., **Karajan**, written to commemorate the death of two fellow Masons, makes good use of the plaintive qualities of the woodwind choir, including the basset horns also found in the *Magic Flute* and *Requiem*. These, of course, are neither bass nor horn, being a sort of tenor clarinet invented by a chap named Horn. Nowadays it is customary to employ a bass clarinet in their stead. Karajan's restrained, judiciously paced reading is in keeping with the mood of the music. The recording is adequate.

From France comes a *Symphony in G* for string orchestra by Jean Rivier (French Col. LFX 828/830), played by the French National Radio Orchestra conducted by **Roger Desormiere**. This is the type of sprawling, introspective music that in the concert hall is apt to emphasize the hardness of the seats. In the home, however, where, shoes off and beer in hand, one can be more in tune with the gentle mood of the composer, the work becomes quite agreeable, if still somewhat spineless. Even the finale, marked *allegro mollo*, is not very vigorous or exciting. The *lento*, probably the most successful section, recalls the atmosphere of Lekeu's *Adagio pour cordes*. The string tone, thinner and cleaner than usually heard on this side, is faithfully recorded.

Sirens From England

Lord Berners' ballet music *Les Sirenes* (Eng. Col. DX1542 Philharmonia Orch., **Ernest Irving**) is pleasant, idle music of no particular distinction. Don't expect it to be equal to the keen humor of his *Triumph of Neptune*. Also to be relegated to the inconsequential is *Dolly*, a piece for two pianos by Gabriel Fauré, orchestrated by Henri Rabaud as Fauré himself might have done the job. Played by the orchestra of the Concerts Colonne under **Jean Fournet** (Pathé PDT 186/7), this delicate, rather faded pastiche is in the same general style as Debussy's *Petite Suite*, without that work's engagingly hummable melodies. Unobtrusive, genteel *Dolly* should be ideal fodder for the wired music services.

Still another work stemming from the Chausson school of languorous rhapsodizing is the *Violin Concerto* of Manila-born Frederico Elizalde, the Spanish composer — conductor, erstwhile prodigy, which is performed by **Christian Ferras** and the London Symphony, **Gaston Poulet** conducting (Decca AK1777/9). Here again we have the pure sweetness of the ripened cane, distilled to a thin, discreet liquid that neither revived nor soothed this listener. The slender tone of Ferras is well suited to the slender creation of Elizalde.

Benjamin Britten's song cycle, *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* (HMV discs DB348/50 **Peter Pears**, tenor and **Benj. Britten**, piano), by the unevenness of its quality presents a difficult problem for the reviewer.

My first reaction was one of revulsion, that any sensitive creator could so distort English poetry in such a knowingly devilish manner. In addition, the disagreeable sounds often produced by Pears did little to allay this discontent. Repeated hearings have softened this judgement to a certain degree. *Oh, my blacke Soule, Since she whom I loved, and Death, be not proud*, lyric and sustained in character, permitting Pears to concentrate on tone production, evoke more than a little valid emotion. Other sections, where the tenor shouts and forces his voice attempting to negotiate the tortuous corners of Britten's pretentious phrases, degenerate into a head long downhill chase between singer and pianist. Both Britten as a composer and, Pears as a vocalist were heard to far better advantage in the *Serenade* (Decca EDA-6).

A soprano quite new to records, who has definite talent and great possibilities, is **Irmgaard Seefried**. Her latest release to come my way is Susanna's fourth act aria from *Nozze di Figaro*, *Deh vieni non tardar*, coupled with *Ach, ich fühl'es* from *Die Zauberflöte* (Eng. Col. LX1145). Her voice has a beautiful quality and is projected with considerable style, especially in the recitative *Giunse al fin il momento*, where she demonstrates a sympathetic appreciation of Susanna's character. Perfunctory accompaniment does not spoil the enjoyment of her singing. —A.W.P.

[We neglected to place Mr. Peckham's initials at the bottom of last month's "Recent Importations".—Ed.]

Recent FFRR Releases

THE THIRD BRANDENBURG CONCERTO is available in the performance of **Boyd Neel and His String Orchestra** (Decca K1619, price \$2.00). Neel's handling of his strings is particularly appealing and his unostentatious musicianship remains laudable. My friend W. R. Anderson's contention that "Neel's men have got about as near as any British band is ever likely to get to the right way of tackling these works (the *Brandenburg Concertos*)" is well taken. While Neel avoids generally massive effects and phrases with sensitivity and feeling, some of the rhythm is not as flexible as

Busch accomplished. But all of 'the performances of the *Brandenburgs* by Neel and his men, which I have heard to date, are worth hearing and knowing. What a mistake it is that record listeners become too attached to one interpretation of a work, but, of course, duplications tax the pocketbook.

A Norwegian soprano, **Sophie Shonning**, has made a record of three Grieg songs worth acquiring (Decca K1208, price \$2.00). Hers is a fresh, spontaneous artistry and her singing is always expressive. Her excellent orchestral accompaniments are played by Boyd Neel and his men. *Fra Monte Pincio* is a difficult song to put across. It is a mood picture of the Pincio, "hill of gardens" at Rome. Only an orchestral accompaniment can do justice to Grieg's tonal colorings — the glow of sunset at the opening, the misty atmosphere recalling memories of the past, and the swarming people. Shonning gives the song character and strength, making it live as I can never previously recall. Her other selections are typical of the composer in his happiest folk style — *The Little Hut*, with which I am unfamiliar, and *'Twas on a Lovely Eve in June*. The latter follows the pattern, being in three verses musically the same. One should know the story of all three songs to appreciate them fully. The picture conjured in the last is that of a Norse maid tending her goats, knitting and gazing dreamily over the fjord. Tauber once made a record of this song (c. 1924) which was most appealing. Miss Shonning does not stress its sentiment though she substantiates the haunting quality of the last bars. The songs are sung in Norwegian.

I notice that our colleague on the N. Y. *Times* finds Reiner's performance of Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* superior to one by **Eduard Van Beinum** (Decca set EDA 105, five discs, price \$11.00). The adjective seems ill-chosen for it remains unqualified.

CORRECTION

The address of
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is
Box 171 Richmond Hill, N. Y.
**(not Richard Hill as printed
in our ad last month)**

(20 years of selling records exclusively by mail)

If Reiner's virtuosity is superior to Van Beinum's treatment of this marvelous score, there still remains much to be said for Van Beinum's musically searching insight into the piece and his feeling for warmhued lyricism. Both performances are valid and both serve to exploit Bartok's genius in a telling manner. There is more spaciousness of sound in the Van Beinum recording and the playing of the **Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra** is superior. Still, I would plump for Columbia's long-playing version, despite some shrillness in the strings, for this is music that fares best without breaks.

Perhaps the worse reviewer's service in the country is that of Decca's FFRR releases. Monthly, we are promised many issues which never materialize. This past month we were invited to hear some records at the offices of Decca. This sort of precedence is particularly distasteful to your editor, for it neither permits him to hear a recording under the ideal conditions nor serves the reader in the end. Let us hope that Decca will in time see the fallacy of their present system. There are many fine releases in recent lists, some of which whet our insatiable musical appetite, but a company's offices or a dealer's booth are not convivial places to an honest survey. We are not alone in this premise, nor the only ones not receiving representative recordings from a given list of Decca. —P.H.R.

From Duet to Sextet

(Continued from page 264)

The duets are excellently sung and well worth seeking. Martinelli, at the entrance of his long career at the Metropolitan, was vocally at his best. After the death of Caruso (1921) he ranked as the leading dramatic tenor for many years (Gigli it should be remembered was regarded as a lyric singer). There are many fine recordings to show Martinelli's ability as an artist and these *Carmen* excerpts rank high among them. Farrar was vocally well suited to the role, as the dark timbre of her middle voice served the music well. Her extraordinary ability to handle text and make it vivid and telling is noted in these records — the gift of the true singing actress. In the duet, *Si tu m'aimes*, her singing of *Oui, je t'aime*, Escamillo is an entrancing moment on the record as it was in the opera house.

A fine duet, revealing the thrilling qualities of Martinelli's dramatic singing, is *Ah! Mathilda, io t'amo* from Rossini's *William Tell*, with

Marcel Journet as his rich voiced partner (76032, 10009, June 1917).

With the opulent voiced mezzo-soprano Maria Duchene, Emmy Destinn rang the bell in two duets from Tchaikovsky's opera *Pique Dame*. These are: *Es daemmet* (88520, June 1915) and *O viens mon doux berger* (88529, 89118, 8017, HMV DK 105, October 1916). In August 1915, Destinn and Martinelli united for a new version of the *Miserere* from Verdi's *Il Trovatore* (88530, 89119, 6190, HMV DB 333). This latter long competed with the famous Alda-Caruso version, as well as the many others available, but was superseded later by the fine Ponselle-Martinelli electrical version (8097).

Ober and Althouse

Two new names added to our list are Margaret Ober and Paul Althouse who were paired in July 1915 in the Love Duet from Act 3 of Moussorsky's *Boris Godounov* (76031). Ober, born in Berlin on April 15, 1885, was a gifted contralto. She made her operatic debut at Frankfurt in 1906 and sang from 1913 to 1917 at the Metropolitan. Her opulent and powerful voice combined with striking stage presence [None who heard her as the Wife of Bath in de Koven's *Canterbury Pilgrims* will forget her entrance astride a donkey. Ed.] combined to win her success in Wagnerian and Italian roles. Her voice is well displayed in the music from *Boris*, and also in a number of single lieder and operatic recordings which are rather uncommon. Althouse was an American tenor who sang many important roles at the Metropolitan. He also achieved notable success as a concert artist. His voice was naturally opulent and appealing, and his style of vocalism exploited it to advantage. Around the same time as his duet with Ober appeared, two others were issued. His partners on these occasions were the gifted lyric sopranos, Lucy Isabel Marsh and Olive Kline. These are *Fuggiam gli ardori* from Verdi's *Aida* with Marsh and the Love Duet from Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* with Kline (Victor Blue Label 55058).

In July and Sept. 1915, two striking duets by Lucrezia Bori and Andreas de Seguro from Chapi's Spanish operetta, *La Revoltosa*, were *Por que de mis ojos* (88526, 89127, 6354, Gr 2-064000, HMV DB 463) and *El Punao de Rosas*, 87225, 87557, Gr 7-64000, HMV DA 478). These selections are rhythmic and exciting. De Seguro has been discussed in a previous installment (October 1946). In later years, his bid for fame seems to be as the teacher of Deanna Durbin.

While Victor was issuing and selling large numbers of records by famous artists on their well-publicized red seal series, they were also making a number of worthwhile and interesting selections by other prominent artists, less well known in some cases in America, which probably accounts for their appearance on other series such as the 55,000 and 45,000 blue labels, and the 63,000, 67,000, and 69,000 black label foreign repressings. I do not have a full list of these records at hand, nor too many facts

wide

chanted Evening; Jo Stafford, The Starlighters, and Paul Weston's Orchestra. Capitol 57-544. Younger Than Springtime and A Wonderful Guy; Margaret Whiting, with chorus, and Frank De Vol's Orchestra. Capitol 57-542. There Is Nothin' Like A Dame; Dave Barbour and His Orchestra, with Male Chorus. Bali Ha'i; Peggy Lee, with Dave Barbour and His Orchestra. Capitol 57-543. Some Enchanted Evening and Bali Frank Sinatra, with Orchestra under direction of Axel Stordahl. Columbia 38446.

Al Goodman presents two neatly played "synopses" which give a good idea of the quality of New York's two top musicals, without vocal personalities to sway one's opinion. As a result, *Kiss Me, Kate* comes through with a slight edge over *South Pacific*. The Cole Porter numbers, *Wunderbar* and *Always True To You* stand well under repeated hearings. The Pickens-Drake version on Victor sounds better than the same number in the "complete" set made by Columbia. *Bianca* is a good runner-up, as a song, but Sarah Vaughn's (one of her first discs for Columbia) doesn't come off as successfully as the Trio's. The Pickens-Drake *Why Can't You Behave* is better than Jo Stafford's. Of the comedy numbers, *Too Darn Hot* is splendidly done by a trio of voices just right for such a song.

In spite of the swell array of artists presenting this group of *South Pacific* numbers, the individual songs do not impress as much as those from *Kiss Me, Kate*. No doubt, the personalities and voices of Ezio Pinza and Mary Martin do much to make them sound better than they are, on the stage. *Bali Ha'i* is the most original number and Peggy Lee does it very well, with good rhythmic support from her husband. Frank Sinatra's version sounds contrived. One of the best rhythm numbers, which is certainly written to order for Mary Martin, is *I'm Gonna Wash* and Fran Warren puts it across with wonderful pep. Stafford's version is just a little too polite. The same can be said for *A Wonderful Guy* and again Fran Warren wins with her healthy earthiness. Margaret Whiting's is too smoothly sung. *Some Enchanted Evening* is the romantic number, and this both Stafford and Sinatra do well because they are in their element.

A stranger in this group of discs is *Once and For Always* by Stafford, on the reverse of *Why Can't You Behave*. This is from Bing Crosby's picture *A Connecticut Yankee* — the subject of the next group of records.

Gracie Fields Souvenir Album; London Album LA-54, 4-10" discs. Vera Lynn Souvenir Album; London Album LA-56, 4-10" discs. *I Don't See Me In Your Eyes Anymore and I'll Keep the Lovelight Burning In My Heart*; Vera Lynn and Sam Browne, with The Bob Farnon Eight. London 403. **Sam Browne Souvenir Album; London Album LA-55, 4-10" discs.** Denny Dennis Souvenir Al-

bum; London Album LA-57, 4-10" discs. Anne Shelton Souvenir Album; LA-58, 4-10" discs. *Go Now and All Is Lost*; Anne Shelton, with the Wardour Singers and Roy Robertson and His Orchestra. London 398. *Put Your Shoes On Lucy*; Anne Shelton, The Keynotes. clarinet and rhythm accompaniment, Heart of Loch Lomond; Anne Shelton, with Roy Robertson and His Orchestra. London 414. **Harry Roy Souvenir Album; London Album LA-59, 4-10" discs.**

London follows in the footsteps of its American recording rivals issuing a series of albums in which is assembled the best and most popular discs by its top-drawer artists. It has gone the American companies one better by not bothering to change the original record numbers or couplings.

Best is the Gracie Fields, with her infectious spirit and energy, her remarkably flexible and brassy voice, and her sly humor. In the album are included her excellent *Now Is the Hour*. The other numbers are representative of her extensive repertoire and versatility but we could have been spared her "Italian" in *Come Back To Sorrento*.

Next for excellence is Anne Shelton, whose vibrant, meaningful voice is well presented in a nicely varied program. Of course, there is *Lover Man*. The words count here, as they do in most of her songs. *Oh! My Darling* is also very good. The singles are in the same vein and equally well presented, though Brahms' *Hungarian Dance No. 5* sounds strange as *All Is Lost*.

Harry Roy, the American who plays sophisticated jazz with an English accent, has a well chosen program including his own compositions, *Piano Madness*, *Canadian Capers*, and *Barrel House Boogie*. This is practically an all-instrumental album, the vocals being relegated so as to be almost incidental.

Denny Dennis has now won himself a name here with American bands, particularly Tommy Dorsey's, but these discs assembled by London really launched him into public favor. *It's the Bluest Kind of Blues*, especially, brought him to the notice of American musicians.

Sam Browne might be called the British Bing Crosby. Born in England, but raised in Massachusetts, he returned to England when he was 18 to win popularity. His English still has a Yankee accent. He served profitable apprenticeship with Jack Hylton and Ambrose, plainly evident in *A Tree In the Meadow*, *An Old Sombraero*, and Loesser's *Feathery Feelin'*, included in this album.

Last, but not least, is Vera Lynn, straightforward and sincere singer who was a great favorite with the troops during the last war and is still one of England's most popular entertainers. *At the Candlelight Cafe* and *You Can't Be True, Dear* are excellent samples, included here. In the single, she teams with Sam Browne for a very effective rendition of *I Don't See Me*, a first-rate song with an intriguing title that is going places.

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